Abstract: Previous research studies have described the connection between domestic violence and homelessness. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that not only are these two social problems correlated, but that domestic violence is among the leading causes of homelessness nationally for women. Reasons for this relationship range from the individual level to the national level, and include mental health consequences related to repeated victimization, social isolation, failure of formal systems to provide services to help-seeking women, lack of coordination between domestic violence and homeless service systems, lack of affordable housing units, and poverty. Solutions will require a paradigm shift from the current practice of compartmentalizing survivors into either women who are victims of domestic violence or who are homeless. Rather, it is critical that we create a more holistic approach that considers women’s simultaneous experiences in order to create a response that supports women as they seek safety and economic stability.
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Introduction

Within the United States, more than one in three women reported being raped, physically assaulted, or stalked by an intimate partner in their lifetime, and almost 42% of women reported being injured as a result of the violence (Black et al., 2011). Each year, domestic violence results in an estimated 1,200 deaths and 2 million injuries among women (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). Specifically, domestic violence has been linked with adverse physical health outcomes in abused women, such as gynecological problems, headaches, chronic pain, gastrointestinal distress, and sexually transmitted diseases (Black et al., 2011; Campbell et al., 2002; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008). In addition to the physical consequences of domestic violence, there are psychological and social consequences, such as anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress symptoms, sleep disturbances, and social isolation (Black et al., 2011; Bonomi et al., 2006; Dutton et al., 2006; Goodkind, Gillum, Bybee, & Sullivan, 2003; Jones, Hughes, & Unterstaller, 2001; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Rose & Campbell, 2000; Warshaw, Brasler, & Gil, 2009).

Another set of consequences relate to the survivors’ economic well-being, and include lost work productivity, inability to pay bills, credit problems, and homelessness (Baker, Cook, & Norris, 2003; Browne, Salomon, & Bassuk, 1999; Lloyd & Taluc, 1999; Swanberg, Logan, & Macke, 2005; Tolman & Rosen, 2001). In particular, some studies have shown associations between domestic violence and unemployment, unstable employment, and poverty (Byrne, Resnick, Kilpatrick, Best, & Saunders, 1999; Riger, Staggs, & Schewe, 2004; Staggs, Long, Mason, Krishnan, & Riger, 2007). Even for women who are able to maintain their employment, there is evidence that their income level is affected, often due to taking unpaid leave and being late to work or having to leave early. For example, one in six women who experienced domestic violence reported time lost from paid work (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). Overall, female victims of domestic violence worked fewer hours than women who did not experience such abuse (Browne et al., 1999; Meisel, Chandler, & Rienzi, 2003; Tolman & Wang, 2005). With inconsistent income or reductions in income, abused women often find it necessary to seek public assistance just to pay bills, including housing costs (Honeycutt, Marshall, & Weston, 2001; Romero, Chavkin, Wise, & Smith, 2003).

This chapter focuses on women who have experienced domestic violence and the connection with one economic consequence: homelessness. Before exploring this connection, it is important to note that homelessness is not defined consistently in the literature; many studies include in their definition only persons who are literally homeless (i.e., persons who reside in
shelters, cars, parks, on the streets, or any other location that is not meant as a residence [U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2010]); whereas other studies include those who are literally homeless as well as the “hidden homeless” (i.e., those doubling up with family or friends because these situations can change suddenly, leaving women without a place to live [Baker et al., 2003]). In 2009, President Obama signed into law two bills (i.e., HEARTH Act, S. 1518/H.R. 7222) that included an expansion of the definition of homeless so that people who were precariously housed also would have access to housing services. On December 5, 2011, the Department of Housing and Urban Development updated its definition of homeless via the HEARTH Act. Therefore, in this chapter, the broader definition is used to illustrate more generally the relationship between domestic violence and homelessness. Specifically, this chapter explores: (a) evidence related to the intersection between domestic violence and homelessness; (b) factors that give rise to this intersection (individual-level, social-level, organizational/systems-level, and national-level); and (c) recommendations and strategies to reduce homelessness among women who have experienced domestic violence.

**Domestic Violence and Homelessness: Establishing the Connection**

In the 1990s, research on the relationship between domestic violence and homelessness began appearing in the literature (Browne & Bassuk, 1997; Bufkin & Bray, 1998; Metreaux & Culhane, 1999; Mullins, 1994; Toro et al., 1995; Zorza, 1991). These studies continued, and now there is general agreement on the connection between these two social problems. For example, according to one study conducted in 10 locations around the United States, 25 out of 100 homeless mothers had been physically abused within the year leading up to the study (National Center of Family Homelessness & Health Care for the Homeless Clinician’s Network, 2003). In Chicago, 56% of women in shelters reported that they had experienced domestic violence (Levin, McKean, & Raphael, 2004). In Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Carolinas, two thirds of parents living in shelters with their children reported domestic violence (Homes for the Homeless, 2000). Domestic violence has been associated as well with a failure to receive subsidized housing among women who were homeless, making it more difficult to cycle out of homelessness (Shinn et al., 1998).

But, not only is there a correlation between domestic violence and homelessness, there is also evidence to suggest that domestic violence is among the leading causes of homelessness nationally for women, with 24% of cities that were surveyed as part of the U.S. Conference of Mayors
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Report identifying domestic violence as a cause of family homelessness (U.S. Conference of Mayors-Sedexho, 2010). Additional studies support this claim, with reports that one in four homeless women is homeless because of violence committed against them (Jasinski, Wesely, Mustaine, & Wright, 2005; Levin et al., 2004; Wilder Research Center, 2007; Institute for Children and Poverty, 2002).

Fewer studies have examined how domestic violence is related to other forms of housing problems that fall just short of homelessness, such as housing instability, which can include sacrificing bills to pay rent, eating less or skipping meals to pay rent, doubling up with family or friends, being threatened with eviction, or experiencing credit problems (Baker et al., 2003; Tolman & Rosen, 2001). One study showed that up to 50% of women seeking services from domestic violence shelters, welfare offices, and the criminal justice system reported at least one housing problem, such as difficulty paying rent, being denied housing or threatened with eviction, and having to move because of partner harassment (Baker et al., 2003). In another study, after adjusting for age, race/ethnicity, marital status, and poverty, women who experienced domestic violence in the past year had almost four times the odds of reporting housing instability than women who had not experienced domestic violence (Pavao, Alvarez, Baumrind, Induni, & Kimerling, 2007).

Reasons for the Connection Between Domestic Violence and Homelessness

With a consensus that these two social problems are linked, it is important to explore the reasons behind the intersection. To answer this question it is necessary to think broadly. Each social problem has many hypothesized causes, with explanations ranging from those at the individual level to the national level. In addition to a causal relationship, there are many factors associated with each social problem that are simply intertwined or correlated. Thus, the complexity is increased exponentially when considering all of these different types of relationships.

To illustrate this complexity, it is helpful to consider the many issues that domestic violence survivors face in their attempts to gain safety and obtain stable housing away from the abuser. These can include (a) mental health issues, such as depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, or substance abuse resulting from repeated victimizations over months/years; (b) the continued stalking women may face by their abusers after separating from them; (c) the need for childcare and other services for their children, especially mental health services for those who witnessed
or experienced abuse; and (d) their attempts to find a job that pays a livable wage (which is especially difficult if they lack previous job experience). In addition to these challenges, there are a limited number of affordable housing units available, and even when women find an acceptable unit, they may face discrimination by landlords who do not want to rent to individuals with a history of domestic violence (Choi & Snyder, 1999; Martin & Stern, 2005; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2007; Ross, 2007).

Given the space constraints of this chapter, it is not possible to go into depth on each of these topics. Rather, the discussion will be framed using an ecological model and highlight a few select factors at each level of the model (Figure 9.1). The ecological model suggests that an individual is surrounded by ever-increasing broader contexts that shape his or her behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this example, the individual is surrounded by her social systems including friends and family. Moving outward, the social system is bound by a set of organizational/systemic policies and procedures. Finally, at the outermost level are national influences that affect the behavior of all other levels. In sociological terms, these can be referred to as micro, meso, and macro levels of explanation. To help anchor the discussion, the different levels will be considered from the standpoint of how they are related to homelessness among women who have experienced domestic violence.
Individual-Level Factors

Within the research on individual-level factors, some have suggested that it is important to consider previous experiences of victimization as it has been shown to be a risk factor for current victimization (Basile, 2008; Kimerling, Alvarez, Pavao, Kaminski, & Baumrind, 2007). The question then is: How is victimization, and especially repeated victimization, associated with homelessness? One way is that women who have been repeatedly victimized are at risk for a range of mental health problems, including PTSD, depression, and substance abuse (Green et al., 2000; Guarino, Rubin, & Bassuk, 2007; Kimerling et al., 2007). Such problems may make it more challenging for women to maintain stable employment (Moe & Bell, 2004; Swanberg et al., 2005) and more difficult for women, especially low-income women, to find and retain stable housing (Phinney, Danziger, Pollack, & Seefeldt, 2007). Therefore, it appears that some of the mental health consequences associated with domestic violence also may be related to women’s difficulties in securing and maintaining housing after separating from their abusive partners. That is not to say that all survivors have mental health problems. Nor is it accurate to point to these issues as the sole reason for homelessness among survivors. Moving outward from the center of the ecological model in Figure 9.1, it is also important to consider social factors.

Social-Level Factors

For women who are trying to separate from an abusive partner, it is difficult for them to do so without help. Women in abusive relationships often report that during the relationship their partners would deny them access to money or other resources. In these cases, women were given only a small allowance as a way to control their activities. Therefore, women who leave an abusive partner often need a variety of resources, ranging from emotional support to tangible support, such as money for rent, deposits, and utilities, and help finding employment, transportation, and childcare (Adams, Sullivan, Bybee, & Greeson, 2008). One option to obtain these resources is to seek help from family or friends. In fact, among low-income women in Baltimore who experienced physical or sexual violence in adulthood, family and friends were identified as typical sources of help when attempting to leave a violent relationship (O’Campo, McDonnell, Gielen, Burke, & Chen, 2002). Generally, family and friends can provide emotional support that may serve as a buffer to mental health problems for women (Belknap, Melton, Denney, Fleury-Steiner, & Sullivan, 2009; Carlson, McNutt, Choi, & Rose, 2003; Coker et al., 2002). In addition, tangible support has been shown to moderate the relationship between lifetime trauma and PTSD (though the measure used to examine
tangible support did not distinguish the source of that support) (Glass, Perrin, Campbell, Soekin, 2007). These are important findings given the relationship between mental health issues and homelessness cited above. However, abusers often isolate women from family and friends (Levendosky et al., 2004). In some cases, after the separation, women isolate themselves out of fear that their abusive partner will threaten or physically hurt their family and friends (Riger, Raja, & Camacho, 2002). Therefore, women may lack the informal support needed to gain stable housing after the separation. Without access to support from family and friends, women may be forced to turn to formal systems for help, especially in cases where the severity of the abuse continues to increase (Goodman, Dutton, Weinfurt, & Cook, 2003).

**Organizational/System-Level Factors**

Within formal systems there are often policies and procedures that must be followed. Accordingly, the organizational/system-level factors that put domestic violence survivors at risk for homelessness may actually stem from the policies and procedures within a particular organization/system. Depending on the formal system from which they seek help, women may or may not receive the services they need to secure stable housing away from the abuser. One set of formal systems many women access are the criminal and civil justice systems. Battered women seek help from these systems for protection and to hold their partners accountable for the abuse. Although these systems do not provide housing, their response has been linked with homelessness among women (Baker et al., 2003; Bufkin & Bray, 1998). When the police are called to the scene, the protocol is typically for the officers to provide women with information on other resources, such as support groups and shelters. These resources may help women avoid becoming homeless should they need to leave their home to get away from their abuser. Also, in some cases, if the police arrest the abuser and the woman is allowed to stay in her home, it may be possible for her to separate from her abuser without having to move (Ponic et al., 2011), which may ultimately reduce her risk of becoming homeless (Baker, Billhardt, Warren, Rollins, & Glass, 2010).

However, although protocols are theoretically in place to support victims of domestic violence, the criminal and civil justice systems have been widely criticized for poor treatment of women and an inability to protect women (Buzawa, Buzawa, & Stark, 2011; Gillis et al., 2006; Letourneau, Duffy, & Duffet-Leger, 2012), both of which could be key intervening variables in women’s homelessness (Bufkin & Bray, 1998). In a study of 50 battered women, 50% reported that police officers minimized their injuries, 33% encountered objectionable questions and comments by judges, and 51% reported that prosecutors asked whether they provoked the abuse (Erez & Belknap, 1998). A more recent study corroborated these earlier findings, with
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women feeling revictimized and not adequately protected by the criminal justice system (Letourneau et al., 2012).

Within the civil justice system, there is evidence to suggest that women who obtain a permanent protection order are less likely to be re-abused over time than those who called the police for domestic violence, but did not have a permanent protection order (Holt, Kernic, Wolf, & Rivara, 2003; Logan, Shannon, Walker, & Faragher, 2006). However, other studies suggest that protection orders do not necessarily guarantee women protection from their partners. One study estimated a 40% violation rate, on average, from the results of 32 studies (Spitzberg, 2002), where abusers continued to stalk and abuse their partners despite being served with a protection order. Further, it is important to consider what happens when a protection order is violated. In some cases, police officers do not arrest men for the violation (Kane, 2000). And, a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling (June 2005) has limited women’s ability to seek redress for police inaction. In Gonzalez vs. City of Castle Rock, where a lawsuit was brought against the police department in Castle Rock, Colorado, for not enforcing a protection order, which resulted in the death of three children at the hands of the abuser, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that enforcement of a restraining order was not mandatory under Colorado law. Therefore, Jessica Gonzales and her children, who were supposedly protected by a restraining order, actually had no right to the enforcement of that order, and, in addition, Ms. Gonzalez could not expect any monetary settlement for failure to enforce the order (Buzawa et al., 2011, p. 304). How this decision will play out in state and local courts across the country is unclear, but if protection orders are not enforced and men are not arrested and prosecuted for their violent behavior, then women may be forced to keep relocating to ensure safety, thereby increasing their risk of becoming homeless.

In addition to housing challenges for women that result from policies and procedures within one organization or system, the lack of coordination across systems has exacerbated women’s ability to become stably housed. One example is the lack of coordination between the domestic violence service system and the housing/homeless service system. Despite evidence on the link between domestic violence and homelessness, there is limited collaboration between the two systems (Baker et al., 2010). In a recent national survey, providers in both domestic violence and homeless service systems reported issues with communication and sharing of resources and expertise (DeCandia, Beach, & Clervil, 2013). It is helpful to put these findings into context by exploring the goals of each system, and to examine how a lack of coordination between the two systems is detrimental to women’s housing stability.

On the one hand, domestic violence shelters are focused on safety planning and a wide array of advocacy services that victims need and want, which can include housing. However, the presence of a history of homelessness
combined with mental illness and/or chemical dependency may prohibit women in current abusive relationships from receiving domestic violence services. Some domestic violence emergency shelters and transitional housing programs run by domestic violence shelters specifically exclude women with mental health or substance abuse issues (Baker, Holditch Niolon, & Oliphant, 2009; Melbin, Sullivan, & Cain, 2003). Even if women are admitted to these programs, they may face other challenges. Transitional housing programs often impose rules that women must follow, such as attending weekly support groups, submitting to staff inspections of their apartments, and having no overnight visitors—even family members. These rules are sometimes viewed as excessive and may lead to women’s dissatisfaction and exit from the programs (Melbin et al., 2003).

By contrast, homeless service providers are focused simply on moving individuals toward stable housing and improved financial stability. Significantly fewer homeless providers reported working with women on safety planning compared to providers at domestic violence service programs (DeCandia et al., 2013). In fact, the presence of current physical danger may preclude domestic violence survivors from admission into homeless shelters or housing programs because of the risk to other clients. In addition, homeless providers may not be aware of the continuing effect of past abuse on women’s present psychological and physical health, which can affect women’s ability to remain stably housed. Finally, the presence of a criminal record may limit women’s ability to access permanent housing (public or private). However, having a criminal record is not uncommon among battered women because of arrests that are related to the abuse (e.g., women may be forced to participate in illegal activities by their partners) or surviving the abuse (Gilfus, 2002; Kopels & Sheridan, 2002; Ritchie, 1996).

Additional challenges homeless providers may face when assisting domestic violence survivors include discrimination and evictions by landlords who hold women accountable for any criminal act committed by a family member, which includes abusive partners and ex-partners (Lapidus, 2003; Renzetti, 2001). Although the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in its 2005 reauthorization prohibits such practices, there are still reports of public housing administrators (and private housing landlords who are not required to adhere to VAWA mandates) evicting women who call the police when their abuser comes to their home and threatens or physically assaults them (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2008).

Therefore, we see two separate systems, each with different perceptions about the needs of their clients and expertise in meeting those needs. Within these systems there is a tendency to compartmentalize women as either experiencing domestic violence or homelessness. Providers in both systems emphasize the need for change at the federal level to create policies and funding streams that are supportive of collaboration (DeCandia et al., 2013). Until
then, women who have been victimized and who are homeless will continue to fall through the cracks, and be less likely to receive the services necessary to gain safety and economic stability.

**National-Level Factors**

As discussed throughout this chapter, women who want to separate from their abusers face a dilemma. In an attempt to keep from being revictimized, women may be forced to separate from their abusive partners, an act that is usually linked to leaving their homes. Thus, to increase their safety, women also increase their risk of becoming homeless because housing options away from their abusers are often limited. In fact, according to the U.S. Conference of Mayors Report, 72% of cities surveyed listed [the lack of] affordable housing as a major cause of homelessness (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2010). Therefore, at the national level, it is important to consider the number of low-income housing units available, with evidence suggesting that there are fewer units available each year. One report documented that 210,000 public housing units have been lost since 1995 due to demolition, sale, or other removal (Western Regional Advocacy Project, 2010). Further compounding women’s limited housing options, during this same time, approximately 360,000 units (particularly project-based Section 8 units) were lost because private landlords of these properties did not renew their contracts (Western Regional Advocacy Project, 2010). And, although domestic violence survivors may be given a preference to receive public housing (which could be of great assistance to women as competition for scarce units is intensified), only about 35% of public housing authorities maintain this preference (Martin & Stern, 2005).

The final national-level factor is the most difficult to address. At its core, homelessness is driven by poverty. Certainly there are other circumstances, only a fraction of which have been described here, but poverty is an overwhelming contributor to homelessness. While this chapter has focused on the intersection between domestic violence and homelessness, the contextual backdrop of poverty cannot be dismissed. In fact, poverty is a risk factor for both homelessness and domestic violence. Research suggests that poverty increases the risk of domestic violence, especially severe violence (Browne, 1995; Browne & Bassuk, 1997; Goodman, Smyth, Borges, & Singer, 2009). In trying to escape the violence, poor women are disproportionately at risk for homelessness compared to women with more resources (Menard, 2001). The positive relationship between gaining safety and poverty is compounded for minority and immigrant women who are at an even higher risk for homelessness because they are already more likely to be living below the poverty level than European American women (Caiazza, Shaw, & Werschkul, 2004; Smith Nightingale & Fix, 2004). Therefore, some researchers have suggested that
the connection between domestic violence and homelessness may actually be a result of the failed communication between the domestic violence movement and the antipoverty movement (Josephson, 2007).

**Recommendations for Reducing Homelessness Among Domestic Violence Survivors**

This section makes recommendations for how service providers, researchers, and advocates can move forward to reduce homelessness among survivors who seek safety from their abusive partners. The proposed recommendations do not necessarily correspond with each level of the ecological model. Rather, the recommendations are focused at the organizational/systems level and national level because ultimately it will require a contextual shift by our systems and society rather than individual-level changes to achieve this goal.

Not surprisingly, the first recommendation is that domestic violence and homelessness should be addressed simultaneously. Some might say that this is intuitive; however, much of what we do in our service provision and our funding announcements is to compartmentalize services and programs instead of taking a more holistic approach. Without a holistic approach, women and children who are the most vulnerable may not receive the services they need because they do not fit neatly within one system. Thus, a holistic approach will require a paradigm shift for both service providers and funding agencies. Eligibility criteria that programs use are often a direct result of funding requirements. For example, housing programs receiving TANF (temporary aid for needy families) money may not be allowed to admit women without children. Other funders may require that funds not be used to provide housing assistance to undocumented immigrants, or to women with active substance abuse issues. Thus, the current paradigm of system and service compartmentalization will need to be replaced with a new paradigm that examines and embraces the intersections of domestic violence and other social problems, while also considering how these intersections are affected by issues such as racism, sexism, and classism (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005).

Following from the first recommendation is the need for coordination between domestic violence and homeless services organizations. One possibility for building these relationships is for both coalitions to develop a set of guidelines for services that could be made available to survivors of domestic violence who are tenants in permanent housing operated by mainstream housing providers. Cross trainings of providers within the two systems could be offered to help implement these service guidelines. Ultimately, these collaborations could foster additional service provider partnerships, including
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with landlords and other community stakeholders who are in a position to provide services to help women achieve safety and economic stability.

A third recommendation emphasizes the importance of educating our criminal justice system about the role it plays, not only in preventing domestic violence, but also homelessness. Research has shown that positive police intervention reduced women’s odds of homelessness after separating from their partners (Baker et al., 2003). This is a critical message to disseminate to both new and experienced police officers. Also, while the focus in this chapter has been on the criminal and civil justice systems and their treatment of survivors, other systems, like the welfare system, have an important role to play as well. In this way, it is not the focus on one system’s response that matters, but rather the response from each system to women’s help-seeking.

As an example, studies on the prevalence of domestic violence among women receiving welfare are approximately 50%, with up to 30% of this group having been abused within the prior year (Lyon, 2002; Tolman & Rosen, 2001). With these numbers, it is clear that the welfare system is in a unique position to provide assistance to domestic violence survivors. However, in 1996, the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (P.L. 104-193), put into effect stringent work requirements and time limits for the receipt of welfare benefits (Josephson, 2007). With limitations placed on their ability to secure benefits, domestic violence survivors now have fewer options by which to escape the abuse. The law did include a Family Violence Option (FVO), whereby women who are victims of domestic violence can be temporarily exempted from work requirements and time limits. The majority of states have adopted this option; however, women are not necessarily receiving the services mandated with the FVO (Hetling, 2011; Lindhorst & Padgett, 2005). There is some indication that case workers, who are often responsible for screening women, are not consistently doing so. It is likely that caseworkers are struggling with the dilemma of managing overwhelming caseloads and taking the extra time needed to screen and assist women who disclose domestic violence (Bell, 2005). According to one study, screening consisted of informing women about the domestic violence policy without actually asking about abuse (Lindhorst, Meyer, & Casey, 2008). Even for women who disclose abuse, many are unlikely to receive information from caseworkers regarding TANF waivers and community resources (Lindhorst, Casey, & Meyer, 2010).

These and other studies suggest that the implementation of the FVO has been problematic, and additional training for caseworkers on how to screen women appropriately and consistently is needed. When such training is provided, caseworkers reported more understanding and empathy for battered women (McKean, 2004). They also were more likely to work with the woman to make a safety plan and offer a waiver from work requirements (Saunders, Holter, Pahl, & Tolman, 2006). Further, several cities have provided funding
to collocate domestic violence advocates within TANF offices. Colocating advocates is identified as a promising practice as advocates can provide more effective screening, foster collaboration between the domestic violence community and TANF offices, and are on hand to train new caseworkers (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2009).

Therefore, depending on the response, help-seeking women may receive the message that they are on their own, either due to the lack (and coordination) of services available from formal systems or mistreatment by these systems. Without help from formal systems, women may be forced to stay in abusive relationships or risk a host of negative outcomes, including homelessness (Baker et al., 2010). Raising awareness among system personnel, holding systems accountable for their actions (or inaction, as the case may be), and advocating for policies and procedures that support women’s attempts to escape abuse and secure economic stability are all critical for reducing homelessness among domestic violence survivors.

A final recommendation relates to the structure and availability of housing options available for women fleeing domestic violence. Generally, there are three options: emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing. Traditionally, in an emergency shelter women are allowed to stay only 30 to 60 days. This short amount of time may not be enough for women to recover emotionally and economically after experiencing abuse for months and often years. As a result, many women return to their abusers (Davies, Lyon, & Monti-Catania, 1998) because they have nowhere else to go after their shelter stay. Transitional housing programs offer women a place to stay for 1 to 2 years; however, there are fewer programs and often women are expected to meet rigid eligibility criteria before being granted admission. Finally, permanent housing options may be available, either from public housing authorities or private landlords.

In recent years the focus seems to be shifting from emergency shelter to longer-term housing with the understanding that stability as well as safety is critical to recovery. This is not to say that emergency shelters and transitional housing programs are not needed, but there also is an increasing need for permanent solutions. Therefore, to meet the long-term needs of survivors, it will be necessary to secure more permanent housing options. This becomes even more important for low-income women who have fewer affordable housing options available to them. In response to this need, some domestic violence providers, in both rural and urban areas, are beginning to create their own housing options for women. Providers are now expanding their roles to include managing apartment buildings so that units are available to survivors at a subsidized rate. Others are writing for grants to build their own apartment buildings, realizing that existing units are insufficient to meet the need. This is only the beginning. Service providers, policymakers, and funding agencies will need to continue to think outside the box to
increase the availability of permanent housing options for survivors. The success of these endeavors will largely depend on forging new collaborative relationships to replace the current silos that exist within service programs and funding agencies.

**Conclusion**

The intersection between domestic violence and homelessness has been discussed at great length in the literature. Explanations for this relationship range from the individual level to the national level. However, solutions to these two intransigent social problems will require creativity and broad-level thinking. They also will require a paradigm shift away from the current practice of compartmentalizing survivors into either women who are victims of domestic violence or who are homeless. Rather, it is critical that we create a holistic approach that considers women’s simultaneous experiences in order to create a response that supports women as they seek safety and economic stability.

**Endnotes**

1. Although research shows that men are also victims of domestic violence, the focus of this chapter is on the economic consequences experienced by female survivors of male violence against women.

2. The 2005 Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act includes several housing provisions that protect domestic violence survivors. One provision prohibits evictions based on real or perceived domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking (sexual assault is specifically not included in these provisions). Another is that a family with a Section 8 voucher may move to another jurisdiction if the family has complied with all other obligations of the program and is moving to protect the health or safety of an individual who is or has been the victim of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking—even if moving otherwise would be a lease violation. VAWA also provides other potential relief, as it gives Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) flexibility that can help domestic violence survivors. For example, PHAs may bifurcate leases; they also may turn the voucher/apartment over to the survivor if she was a household member, but not on the lease; and they may grant emergency transfers.

3. Section 8, also known as the Housing Voucher Program, is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Section 8 allows low income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford housing by providing rental subsidies to landlords on behalf of the participating family. Housing can include single family homes, townhouses, or apartments as well as units located in subsidized public housing developments (also known as project-based housing).
4. Previously known as AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), Title I of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (P.L. 104-193) gave fixed block grants to states to provide temporary assistance for needy families (TANF). In an effort to end welfare dependency, under TANF, those receiving benefits are required to work. In addition, the law instituted time limits within which individuals are eligible for benefits.

References


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